

Assisted living moves forward

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Commissioners vote to seek
nonprofit status for facility

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The Sullivan County Board of Commissioners on Tuesday took another step in its effort to build an assisted living facility, but questions remain about plans to see the project through.

The board voted 2-0, with Commissioner Ben Nelson abstaining, to seek nonprofit status as an organization that can apply for grants and accept money on behalf of the facility.

Setting up the 501(c)3 is one of many tasks included in the county's contract with Massachusetts-based consultant Michael Pulling, said Don Clarke, chairman of the Board of Commissioners.

"It is just keeping up with current obligations," County Manager Ed Gil de Rubio said Wednesday.

Gil de Rubio said that the nonprofit will be used to seek grants that eventually could help low-income seniors make down payments on the facility.

County officials had planned to solicit those payments this year, but Nelson last month proposed putting the project aside until after the contentious issue of whether an outside consultant, Genesis HealthCare, should continue to assist the county in running the nursing home.

"If Genesis leaves cold turkey, I think we're going to have our hands full."

Ben Nelson
Board of Commissioners

The commissioners have yet to vote on Nelson's motion.

"I'd like to get a blueprint on the nursing home before we go too far with assisted living," he said Wednesday.

Nelson said the nature of that plan likely will determine if the county can take on the assisted living project.

If Genesis' presence at the home simply is scaled back, Nelson said the facility could go forth. But if it is removed altogether and the county is strapped with finding a new administrator and physical and occupational therapists — all of whom are Genesis employees — he said assisted living may have to be put on the back burner.

That is because, in addition to dealing with Sullivan County Health Care, the county in 2007 will be deeply involved in

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developing plans for an overhaul of the county correctional facility.

"If Genesis leaves cold turkey, I think we're going to have our hands full," Nelson said.

But Commissioner-elect Jeff Barrette, who will replace Clarke in January, said Wednesday that he was confident that the county could develop a plan for the management of the nursing home and pursue the assisted living facility.

"I am of the opinion that we will have the nursing home

ironed out in the next couple months and I am also of the opinion that we can in fact handle working on assisted living," Barrette said. "The main concern is doing it in such a way that there's no drain on the taxpayers."

Commissioner Ethel Jarvis also said she was committed to moving forward with the assisted living project.

"We are going to go forth with it," she said.

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